

Questions on COVID:

- 1. Are institutions of higher education ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during the 2020 Fall Semester? When applicable, please speak directly to classroom and lab settings, dormitories and dining halls.***

The Texas A&M University System has been and continues to work diligently to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during the 2020 Fall Semester. Our universities have regularly communicated guidance to the campus community and stakeholders, relating to a number of issues, including employees' and students' return to campus, registration, space reservations and gathering size limitations, protocols for crowds, face-to-face instruction, face covering policies, enhanced cleaning and safety policies and procedures, and guidance on reporting COVID, testing, and contact tracing.

Our institutions are offering classes in a variety of formats, including face-to-face with classrooms reconfigured to accommodate social distancing, traditional online courses, and hybrid courses that allow students to attend class in person or remotely.

Additionally in classroom and lab settings, dormitories and dining halls, many institutions have implemented face covering requirements in all indoor public areas on campus, including lobbies, restrooms, classrooms, teaching and research laboratories, common spaces in residence halls, conference rooms and break rooms.

- 2. What plans are in place for on-campus COVID-19 testing? Do institutions have the capacity to provide testing on campus, both in terms of available supplies and labs to process tests?***

Texas A&M Health is leading a system-wide COVID-19 testing initiative via an agreement entered into between the Texas A&M University System and Curative, Inc. to provide access to oral testing across all System universities and agencies. The free testing program for all students, staff, and faculty began in July of this year. The System has committed to supplying up to 20,000 tests per month, and as part of the agreement with Curative, Inc., testing results are provided from their lab within 30 hours. This increased accessibility and availability of COVID-19 testing continues to help Texas A&M mitigate the spread by taking preventative and proactive measures to ensure the safety of students, faculty, staff and communities across the state of Texas. Positive tests across the System will be handled by local health departments and the Texas A&M COVID Investigation Operations Center to assess the COVID-19 situation as it evolves.

- 3. If applicable, what are plans for collegiate athletics this Fall? How will student athletes be kept safe? If fans will be permitted to attend events, how will fans be kept safe?***

Texas A&M University:

Texas A&M Athletics is working within the parameters laid out by the state and local authorities. In regards to the safety of student-athletes, Texas A&M Athletics created a Performance and Wellness group that focuses solely on how to safely return student-athletes to activity. Their detailed plan that outlines student-athlete daily screenings, testing, facility cleanings, counseling and sport psychology services can be found at https://12thman.com/documents/2020/8/18//TAMU_P_W_RTA_ALL.pdf.

They will also follow policies and testing parameters outlined by the Southeastern Conference (SEC). Key areas include:

- **ESSENTIAL ON-FIELD PERSONNEL**

Essential personnel shall be the only individuals who have game day access to field and sideline, to include student-athletes, coaches and support personnel, game officials, medical personnel, limited institutional personnel, law enforcement, a limited number of photographers and contracted radio/TV personnel, and other limited personnel essential to the execution of the game.

All individuals with access to the team bench area must participate in the SEC COVID-19 testing protocol.

- **ON-FIELD PERFORMANCES**

Bands will be restricted from performing on the field before games and at halftime. The policy will be revised during the year based on developments around COVID-19.

Where stadium capacities are reduced if fan attendance is permitted, visiting team bands and spirit squads shall be prohibited from attending games at SEC stadiums; SEC institutions shall have the discretion on whether their band and/or spirit squad attends a conference (SEC vs SEC) neutral site game.

On-field performances, presentations and recognitions shall be prohibited including, but not limited to, sponsor and donor recognitions and athletic department student-athlete and team recognitions.

- **DISINFECTION**

Home institutions are required to disinfect home and visiting team spaces prior to each game utilizing approved disinfectants. These spaces shall include the locker rooms, coaches' rooms, training rooms, sidelines, coaches' booths and any additional areas provided to either team. The visiting team shall be allowed to further disinfect its spaces utilizing approved disinfectants after receiving approval from the home team's facility staff on the disinfectants it desires to use. Upon completion of disinfection, the spaces and equipment must be locked down until the teams are granted initial access on Thursday or Friday prior to game day. Once both teams have accessed their spaces, only team staff are allowed inside the spaces and no outside individuals, including television personnel, are allowed access.

- **MEDIA OPERATIONS**

Press box seating capacity shall be no more than 50% of current seating availability in the press box, and all individuals in the press box shall wear a face covering. If required by national, state and/or local guidelines, the press box seating capacity shall be less than 50% of the current seating available in accordance with the national, state and/or local guidelines. Post-game press conferences will be conducted virtually.

Counseling and Sport Psychology services are available for all student-athletes through virtual appointments with Texas A&M sport psychologists. Academic assistance is provided in a virtual setting for all student-athletes throughout the academic semester.

Since this decision was made, Texas A&M Athletics has worked diligently to build out several options for the Kyle Field capacity plan in accordance with current state, county and local guidance to host Aggie football games as safely as possible. Texas A&M University will make

the best decision in the interest of public health as it relates to all students, student-athletes, faculty, staff, visitors to campus, and the community at large. Numerous risk mitigation features will be deployed to promote a “safe as possible” game day experience at Kyle Field. Some examples of these risk mitigation features for fans include a reduced capacity stadium, social distancing, requiring all patrons entering the stadium to wear a face covering, cashless concession stands and reminders to frequently wash hands.

Throughout this process they have made decisions based on current information, guidance of University leadership, and local and state health officials to create a safe as possible environment. Given the fluid landscape, all plans are subject to change.

Other Institutions:

The NCAA Division II president’s council voted this week not to hold championships for 7 fall sports.

4. What do projected enrollment figures and formula funding look like to institutions for this school year?

Enrollment figures differ by institution, but all are watching these numbers very carefully. More concrete numbers will be available after the 20th class day. Even if the institution is projecting an increase in enrollment, unforeseen financial and other effects due to COVID could change these numbers rapidly. Formula funding, which accounts for 80 percent of our institutions’ net GR appropriations, is ultimately a legislative decision. Because formula funding supports the core instructional, operational, and infrastructure costs at our institutions, our highest priority is maintaining general revenue support to these formulas.

5. Has there been a noticeable impact on staff or faculty retention with regard to concerns about the pandemic?

At the present time, there has not been a noticeable impact on staff or faculty retention with regards to concerns about the pandemic.

6. Health Related Institutions were exempt from the 5% budget cuts earlier this year, due to their important role in resolving the public health crisis. What are some of the programs, research, and responses to the pandemic that our Health Related Institutions have contributed?

Texas A&M Health has been a leader in the response to COVID-19, utilizing the expertise and commitment to service of its students, faculty, and staff to lead testing and contact tracing efforts; direct research projects; and provide services in innovative ways during the pandemic.

Texas A&M Health assisted with the early design of a contact tracing program for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), through which Texas A&M Health strategized to mobilize Texas A&M University System existing resources for the statewide contact tracing initiative workforce. Texas A&M was the first academic institution in Texas to contract with DSHS, immediately deploying personnel from Texas A&M University and other Texas A&M System partners, including Healthy South Texas and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Texas

A&M Forest Service, and the Colonias Program at Texas A&M University, to provide epidemiologists, contact investigators, and contact tracers as part of the state's Texas Health Trace system. On a local level, Texas A&M Health formalized an interagency agreement with the Brazos County Health District to form the Texas A&M COVID Investigation Operations Center. Through this agreement, Texas A&M Health is selecting, training, and managing up to 60 employees, including contact tracers, case investigators and epidemiologists, to provide contact tracing services to the Brazos County region. In addition, Texas A&M Health is providing similar contact tracing services for every campus location throughout the state, and for employees of all Texas A&M System agencies, wherever they are located throughout Texas.

In addition to testing and contact tracing efforts, Texas A&M School of Public Health (SPH) is leading a COVID-19 response and modeling initiative. Faculty and students within the School of Public Health have been actively involved in developing actions and lessons learned reports using their experiences working within Texas and throughout the world, and in conjunction with the Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM, a Texas A&M System agency) and the Office of the Governor. In addition, SPH faculty have been documenting and modeling the spread of COVID-19 and the related health care system impacts. Since April, utilizing real-time data from the state and collaborating partners, the SPH has led a University-wide group to provide weekly updates on the current status and future predictions of the spread of COVID-19 statewide, as well as locally. These updates are shared with DSHS, the Texas Emergency Management Advisory Group, University leadership, and local decision makers.

From a research perspective, Texas A&M Health is involved in or leading numerous efforts in vaccine development and treatment responses. The Texas A&M University System and Texas A&M Health Center for Innovation in Advanced Development and Manufacturing (CIADM) received a federal task order as part of the Operation Warp Speed initiative, which reserved production capacity at CIADM to mass manufacture the COVID-19 vaccine candidate Novavax, Inc., NVX-CoV2373, and to potentially manufacture other leading candidates for COVID-19 vaccines. CIADM is currently working with its partner Fuji North America to build out facilities and processes to manufacture as many as 500 million vaccines. The CIADM was one of three centers developed in the U.S. in response to the H1N1 influenza pandemic by the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Agency, or BARDA, part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Texas A&M Health is leading a group of scientists and medical doctors with Harvard's School of Public Health, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, and the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston to repurpose the vaccine, BCG, a nearly 100-year-old tuberculosis vaccine still in use worldwide. Researchers hope to demonstrate that the BCG mitigates the effects of COVID-19 and/or improves the impact of a vaccine, allowing fewer people to be hospitalized or to die from the illness. Other research projects include a vaccine evaluation study; an investigation into fluorescent biosensors that can detect virus particles for flu, dengue, Zika and now COVID-19; and the use of adult stem cell products to treat lung injuries caused by COVID-19. Texas A&M Health is also working in partnership with the biopharmaceutical company Pulmotect and MD Anderson Cancer Center on an inhaled therapeutic drug that could provide short-term immunity against COVID-19.

The Texas A&M Health Engineering Medicine (EnMed) program - a collaboration between Texas A&M Health and the Texas A&M College of Engineering - has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in a multitude of innovative ways and in support of Texas Medical Center

organizations like MD Anderson, Baylor Scott & White, Memorial Hermann, and Houston Methodist by creating prototypes, testing, and fabrication in the following areas:

- COVID-19 testing booths
- 3D printed swabs for COVID-19 testing
- Electric beam decontamination of PPE N95 masks
- Inhaled buffer to enable multiple patient usage of inhalers
- Simpler alternatives to ventilators
- DIY PPE masks
- Intubation chambers
- 3D printed spacers
- 3D printable autoclavable masks
- PPE gowns
- 3D printable PEEP valve for ventilators
- Sterilizing N95 masks
- Robotics for COVID-19
- Smartphone app to capture community spread patterns

In keeping with its mission to improve health outcomes in rural and underserved areas, Texas A&M's Healthy South Texas program is providing emergency diabetes management kits and medication assistance to low-income individuals, many of whom have lost their health insurance coverage along with their employment during the pandemic. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Texas A&M Health College of Dentistry has provided ongoing emergency dental services to patients in its North Texas clinics, the majority of whom are uninsured and have no other access to dental care.

In addition, Texas A&M Health deployed Texas' first telehealth station of its kind in Cameron, Texas to help address the growing crisis related to rural health care access that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Texas A&M Health has also worked to provide up-to-date and accurate information to students, faculty, staff, and the general public through more than 3,000 local, state, national, and international media appearances, numerous articles, and a free video series, *COVID-19 Conversations*.

7. How have state and federal COVID-related funds already impacted budgets?

Across the Texas A&M System, the mandated 5% budget reductions for the 2020-21 biennium total \$84.6 million. This reduction, coupled with \$150.9 million in COVID-related losses and offset by federal CARES funding (\$56.3 million in institutional support and \$64.7 million in funds for our Minority Serving Institutions), resulted in a net loss of \$149.3 million across the System.

These reductions hurt. Our institutions had to cut into the teaching and services provided to our students that are and will continue to impact students' success and time to degree. Continuing these reductions into the 2022-23 biennium will further harm our students.

8. How has the pandemic affected the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges?

There are no community colleges within the Texas A&M University System. However, many of our regional institutions within the System, like small and/or rural community colleges, serve a greater proportion of at-risk students who require a variety of student support functions in order to succeed, including additional academic preparation, hands-on advising, and financial support. Lacking economies of scale, small regional universities now face the difficult task of continuing these critical services for students with reduced budgets.

9. Does your institution have a public, online dashboard for the reporting of positive COVID-19 cases which is updated daily? If so, what is the link to the dashboard?

Below are two links regarding TAMUS COVID reporting and data.

- The first link, TAMUS: <https://redcap.tamhsc.edu/surveys/?s=N38DRD4EMK>, is the portal used by students, faculty and staff at all our system members to report COVID results.
- The second link is the TAMU Online Dashboard that may be found at: <https://www.tamu.edu/coronavirus/dashboard/>. This link shows daily new cases at Texas A&M University. Other institutions in the Texas A&M System have similar reporting mechanisms available on their websites.

